

## **STATEMENT ON A MATTER OF OFFICIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

### **The Bailiff:**

Now we come to a second statement by the Minister for Planning and Environment regarding the appointment of an Architectural Supremo.

### **8. Senator F.E. Cohen (The Minister for Planning and Environment):**

It gives me great pleasure to report that I have appointed an Architectural Supremo to advise me on design issues for the Waterfront. I have appointed Hopkins Architects of London, recently voted one of the world's top 5 most admired architects by his peers. The practice is run by Sir Michael Hopkins. Hopkins Architects have a reputation for creating buildings that combine innovation and popular public appeal often in a sensitive setting. They consistently win major international awards and most notably were awarded the RIBA's (Royal Institute of British Architects) Royal Gold Medal. Hopkins work across all architectural sectors including master planning in urban regeneration but have become best known for landmark buildings such as Glyndebourne Opera House in Sussex, Portcullis House at Westminster, the Mound stand at Lord's cricket ground, the Welcome Trust Headquarters and the Aviemore Children's Hospital. They are also working on several major international projects including a business village in Dubai, campuses at Yale and Princeton Universities and an office, retail and restaurant tower in Tokyo. Sir Michael Hopkins is a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, the Royal Institute of Architects in Scotland, the Royal College of Art, Nottingham University, London Guild Hall University, University of East Anglia and he is a Royal Academician. He has served as President of the Architectural Association, as a Royal Fine Art Commissioner and as a Member of the London Advisory Committee to English Heritage. Sir Michael has served as a Member of the RIBA Council and as a trustee of the British Museum. The appointment delivers the opportunity of world-class architecture on the Waterfront bringing pride and inspiration to the Island. Hopkins will work on all aspects of the Waterfront proposals including the building developments, the design and creation of properly integrated public spaces and landscaping. The majority of the cost of Hopkins' work will be passed on to the developers. However, some costs will have to be met by my department from within existing budgets. Hopkins' work has already begun and directors visited the Island last week. I will be meeting them again later this week as this is a project in which I intend to maintain a close personal involvement. All new buildings on the Waterfront, of whatever height, will be subject to the scrutiny of Hopkins. I will only consider processing developers' proposals if they have achieved the support of Hopkins. However, providing developers are prepared to accept the requirement for exceptional architecture, I do not envisage this appointment resulting in any significant delays. This is a very exciting appointment and I am very much looking forward to encouraging the commissioning of buildings on our Waterfront of exceptional quality.

#### **8.1 Deputy J.B. Fox:**

I wonder if an eminently well-known opportunity has taken place but I was just curious to know who was also on the short list, if he is able tell us, it would just interesting to know.

#### **Senator F.E. Cohen:**

I think it would be inappropriate to list the other candidates who I interviewed but if the Deputy would care to look at the Architects' Journal list of the top 100 Architects in the world that was published very recently, all of those who I considered were in the top 10.

## **8.2 Deputy J.A. Martin:**

The Minister mentions that the majority of cost will be passed on. Could he tell us what the cost is? Could he also tell us how long Hopkins will be retained by the States of Jersey and in his second but last paragraph, he states: "I will only consider permitting developers' proposals if they have achieved the support of Hopkins." Surely, Sir, can this not be challenged in the Royal Court?

## **Senator F.E. Cohen:**

I will deal with some of those points in reverse order, I am sorry. As far as challenges are concerned, the Planning Applications Panel and/or the Minister will make the decisions. Hopkins Architects will act as advisers to me as Minister because the intention is to achieve world-class design. The only way we are able to do that is if we have a world-class architect advising us on whether proposals meet those criteria. I am very keen to try and encourage developers of significant buildings themselves to engage internationally acclaimed architects for their proposals and I hope that this appointment will encourage them to that end. As far as the costs are concerned, I cannot say presently what the total costs will be. The initial stages will involve some visioning which will not be a terribly - comparatively - expensive operation and the costs of the visioning will be born by the department but the significant element of the costs of engaging Hopkins will be passed on to the developers on a project by project basis. As far as how long they will be commissioned for, we can break it at any time we wish. However, my intention is to retain them right the way through. The objective of this appointment is to deliver world-class buildings. That comprises 2 elements. The first is the design and the approval; and the second is the delivery of the buildings themselves and we certainly do not want to risk any dumbing-down, so my intention is that the architectural adviser will work with the department until the doors of the building open and bear in mind the architectural adviser will not just be looking at the individual buildings but will be looking at the general landscaping, public spaces at the integration of public spaces and at what those public spaces contain. We will also be looking at what I hope will be a significant cultural addition to the Island and the Waterfront.

## **8.3 The Deputy of St. Peter:**

The Minister mentioned his concern about the current buildings on the Waterfront. In his visioning process, will a blind eye be given over what we have there at the moment or will his new advisor be able to advise on the future or lack of future of some of the buildings that currently exist?

## **Senator F.E. Cohen:**

This answer is somewhat speculative because the intention of delivering a world-class Waterfront is primarily to deliver buildings from which Islanders derive pride and inspiration. If we are successful in doing that and I sincerely believe we will be, the effect should be to drive-up the land values of the existing buildings to a level where the present buildings do not constitute the most economic use of that land and that will be our best chance, for example, to see a redevelopment of some of the much-hated buildings like the cinema and others.

## **8.4 Deputy C.J. Scott Warren of St. Saviour:**

Does the Minister agree that with hindsight such a high calibre architectural practice should have been engaged for the Waterfront many years ago?

## **Senator F.E. Cohen:**

I think in the past, previous Committees and Presidents have been hopeful that developers would do this themselves, however, the schemes that have been proposed, particularly in the last year, did not generally seem to meet with much public acclaim and it is from that that I reached this position of seeking to appoint an internationally acclaimed architect.

#### **8.5 Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour:**

Notwithstanding the appointment of Sir Michael Hopkins, which in my humble opinion is a good one, does the Minister not think that with such a large development, such as the Waterfront, the normal practice would be an international competition where major companies are invited to submit plans which would be of little or no cost to the people of Jersey and with a panel of world-class architects sitting as judges. Does he not agree this would have been the best practice?

#### **Senator F.E. Cohen:**

I am afraid that was not an option. We have a situation where the Waterfront Enterprise Board have development partners. I was not in a position to dictate that the developers and WEB should enter into some form of competition. What I have chosen to do is to take a different approach, which is to control the design that they are likely to get approval for and to try and seek some holistic overview of the totality of the Waterfront and to ensure there is some synergy between the development schemes. The concept of a competition would really only have worked if the whole of the Waterfront had gone out for competition and that would clearly have involved the 3 large developers getting together and being one which is not the case.

#### **8.6 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Can the Minister explain what advantage it is to Jersey to drive-up site prices? Surely driving-up site prices just produces more expensive buildings.

#### **Senator F.E. Cohen:**

It does not. We are talking about building a Waterfront that, I have repeatedly said, will hopefully deliver our pride and inspiration to the Island. That means high-quality buildings that are expensive to construct. If the development is successful and those buildings themselves are successes, the area around them will be improved in perception and in economic value and it is that that will hopefully deliver improved usage of the existing allocated space.

#### **8.7 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:**

Would the Minister agree that bringing in yet another party could have the potential for further complicating the tension that appears to exist between 2 States bodies with different remits for the same area, i.e. Planning and WEB? How is he going to deal with that?

#### **Senator F.E. Cohen:**

Clearly a very important question. The relationship between the Planning Department and the Waterfront Enterprise Board is a very important relationship for the Waterfront to succeed. However, injecting into the process an architectural adviser of the level of Sir Michael Hopkins, I think should put the design issues beyond doubt. I am seeking to avoid the constant argument of the developer claiming something is a good proposal in design terms and the Planning Department and/or WEB feeling that it may be something other. We will now have somebody who will be able to advise us on the design element whose opinion is beyond doubt and that is the purpose. So, I hope that it will lead to an improvement in the working relationship between

the Waterfront Enterprise Board and the Planning Department but it is very important that the developers and the Waterfront Enterprise Board understand that the design levels have been significantly raised as of today and no-one is going to get anywhere if proposals are put forward that are not of the standard that will be required by Sir Michael Hopkins, his team and by the Planning Department who they are advising.

**The Bailiff:**

That concludes the 10 minute question period of the Minister.